

P E R S O N A L I T Y P R O F I L E

Ginger Gibson: The ultimate organizer

By John Ira Petty

When it was over, the voice on the two-way radios used by JSC Open House organizers was a raspy echo of hoarseness. But the voice's owner, Virginia "Ginger" Gibson, did not seem to mind.

Gibson is a management assistant in the Center Operations Directorate, although she functions as the directorate's special events coordinator. "That means I do whatever they want me to do," she said. Her duties include organizing site logistics for Open House, the Ballunar Liftoff Festival, Safety Day, Inspection 98 and many other events.

At Open House, she carried a pager, two radios and two cell phones (which accounted for the hoarseness) with her on her travels around the site in the electric-powered grounds truck, complete with a sign identifying it as "Ginger's Buggy." Her duties included all sorts of logistics – dealing with tents, tables, chairs, water, security, power, grounds maintenance, custodial preparations and, during the event itself, visitors looking for particular attractions or lost children.

Of Open House she said, "I don't think we could do anything more positive. It's a lot of effort, but by the end of the day you have to be kind of excited about working here because the public's enthusiasm rubs off on you."

Other events – from Houston Livestock



JSC Photo S98-13392 by Steve Candler

Ginger Gibson and Jerry McCullough of Brown & Root review logistics issues prior to Inspection 98.

Show & Rodeo activities and the leadership conference to American Heritage Day fill the calendar. She also is responsible for center holiday decorations.

Gibson is a native of Nashville, Tenn. After finishing high school there she became a telephone operator. Later she moved to Huntsville, Ala., where she married husband Gene, a design engineer working at Marshall Space Flight Center. There she worked in sales and marketing.

As the Apollo program wound down, they moved to Pascagoula, Miss., and then, in 1973, to Houston. Gibson came to work

at JSC in May of that year as a telephone operator. She was a temporary employee and planned to work for just a few months at the center. But when a permanent position became available, she was on the civil service register and got the job. She has been here ever since.

Gibson has been in COD the whole time, which is one reason she knows it so well. Being a switchboard operator for years gave her a good overview of the entire center. She subsequently went to work in COD's Construction Branch in the Plant Engineering Division as the branch

secretary and has been in the directorate office since 1990.

Gibson was on the Federal Women's Program Committee during her operator days. "I got involved in doing programs and setting up different things, so I've kind of been known as the center social director, even when I had other jobs," she said. She has been a big part of the Employee Activities Association since the 1980s and has served as its president for years.

Beginning in the mid-80s, her directorate held a chili cookoff, which became a major event. As many as 3,000 attended the affair held at the Gilruth Center. A small city would spring up on the Gilruth grounds as participants tried to outdo one another. The COD chili cookoff thrived for seven years.

Gibson still does a lot of charity work but not as much as she once did. She has belonged to the PBX /Telecommunicators of Houston since her time working on the JSC switchboard, serving as its international president last year.

Through her association with the organization she became involved in muscular dystrophy charity work and served on the executive board of the Houston Gulf Coast Chapter Muscular Dystrophy Association. She has served for many years as the PBX/Telecommunicators of Houston MDA coordinator.

She coordinated and supervised about 250 telephones, supervisors and the camera phone for the Houston muscular dystrophy telethon's communications for 18 years, from the year Ron Stone began as emcee of the event to the year after he left. She is still active with the MDA and supports many of its events throughout the year. ■

New Language Education Center bows in

By John Ira Petty

The new, ultramodern JSC Language Education Center made its formal debut recently with a well attended midday open house.

The language center was established to teach JSC employees the languages of International Space Station partners. The Human Resources Office and the Space Flight Training Division run the center.

Russian is the primary language taught. A few Japanese courses also are available. The language center also offers English for foreign space station crew members, liaisons and flight surgeons.

Self-study audiotapes and texts in other languages including Portuguese, Italian and French will be available soon. More languages will be added based on need.

The language center boasts 10 student audio work stations that allow the students to work, independently or in groups, on listening, speaking and comprehension skills. It also has 10 student computer stations with interactive learning software, four multi-standard television carrels with VCRs (as well as VCRs in each of the classrooms) and a library of books and reference materials. The language center has 10 classrooms, a student study center and office space for the instructors.

Debbie Denton-Misfeldt of the Human Resources Development Branch is in charge of centerwide language training. She said that about 100 non-astronaut students are enrolled in classes at any one time. Susan Anderson of the Space Flight Training Division is responsible for the astronaut classes. She said about 20 are enrolled.

Tech Trans International Inc., which also does JSC's Russian translation and interpretation, is responsible for teaching Russian and English at the language center and for developing the curriculum.

Betty Lou Leaver is Tech Trans' language program director. She and Assistant Director Paula Bilstein supervise eight full-time Russian and English language instructors. One instructor is from the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif. Another instructor is under contract to teach Japanese three days a week.

All badged employees, civil servants or contractors may use the language center's multimedia equipment and check out materials from its library. Language and culture courses are open to civil servants. Contractors may enroll on a space-available basis.

For managers and astronauts who cannot attend classes regularly, the language center will develop individual study plans, which will include time to meet with the instructor for consultation.

The language center's hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday and 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday.

Anderson, responsible for astronaut classes, can be reached at x47718. Denton-Misfeldt, responsible for language training for non-astronauts, can be reached at x33077. ■



JSC Photo S98-11753 by Mark Sowa

Language instructor Aimee Roebuck guides engineer Heather Paul through the language software on the multimedia workstations at the Language Education Center.

JSC Clinic to offer blood pressure and cholesterol checkup

On October 29 and 30, the JSC Clinic again will offer cholesterol profiles and blood pressure checks. NASA civil servants and contractor employees on site who have not had these tests in the past year are invited to participate in this Total Health Program.

High blood cholesterol and high blood pressure are two of the three main controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease. Elevated cholesterol and high blood pressure are known as the "silent killers." They usually have no symptoms but can place you at a higher risk for strokes, heart attacks, heart failure and other cardiovascular diseases.

What are your risk factors? Find out by calling x34111 to make an appointment. Appointments are limited. ■



total health